

HISTORIC & CONNECTION

A newsletter of the city of Las Vegas Planning & Development Department. The Historic Preservation Commission is dedicated to saving the city's legacy and heritage.

Restored Historic Fifth Street School is a "Cultural Oasis"

by Courtney Mooney, historic preservation officer

The long-awaited conversion of the Historic Fifth Street School into a center for cultural organizations is complete. More than \$13.4 million in funding for this building's cultural transformation was provided by the city of Las Vegas Redevelopment Agency. The building and its site are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

Past alumni, Las Vegas city officials and supporters of historic preservation celebrated the facility's reopening with great fanfare on September 22, 2008.

The building was operated as the Las Vegas Grammar School from 1936 through 1966. Federal New Deal and local school bond monies funded the construction that provided the early education needs for the city of approximately 12,000 people. The complex has informally been referred to as the Fifth Street School almost since its inception, due to its location on Fifth Street, now called Las Vegas Boulevard.

The rehabilitation project started in mid-2004 with some demolition including the interior elements added when Clark County converted the building into offices in the 1970s. The entire tile roof was replaced with barrel tiles in the original pattern and color. The ceiling heights were restored to their original state in most of the structures and the interiors were remodeled to meet today's standards and codes.

Preserved were the green and blue mosaic tile patterns and decorative fountain in the building's center courtyard where six shade trees have also been planted. More than 141 doors and windows were carefully recreated, as only 30 of the originals could be salvaged. The entire complex has been returned to its original colors as confirmed by historic research.

Built in an era before air-conditioning, the design



The standing-room-only of mostly alumni audience at the Historic Fifth Street School rededication on Sept. 22 enjoyed performances by the Las Vegas Philharmonic and the Nevada School of the Arts Violin Ensemble in the beautifully remodeled auditorium.

and construction of the school helped keep it cool in the intense heat, including the heat-resisting overhangs, 10-inch thick concrete walls, and north- and east-facing windows that today are heralded as "day lighting," a green building practice. The cooling breezeways are a significant feature of the historic building, comprising 10,000 of the total 38,000 square-foot building.

Today, the former school serves as a cultural oasis in the heart of downtown Las Vegas and hosts several local arts and

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View of the Historic Fifth Street School from Clark Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard.

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION
CITY OF LAS VEGAS

City Celebrates National Historic Preservation Month

Annual Historic Preservation Awards Presented

It is important to celebrate the role of history in our lives and the contributions made by dedicated individuals in helping to preserve the historic resources that have shaped the heritage of the city of Las Vegas and its people.

"*This Place Matters*" was the theme for National Preservation Month in May 2008, which was cosponsored by the city of Las Vegas and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Mayor Oscar B. Goodman and the City Council presented Chairman Bob Stoldal representing the Historic Preservation Commission with a proclamation in commemoration.

Mayor Goodman and Stoldal presented the 2008 city of Las Vegas Historic Preservation Awards to six deserving honorees. **Preserve Nevada**, represented by former Senator Richard Bryan; the **Preservation Association of Clark County**, represented by Corinne Escobar; and the **Atomic Age Alliance**, represented by Mary-Margaret Stratton, were honored for their outstanding support and advocacy for the preservation of the historic resources within the city of Las Vegas and advancing the education and appreciation of historic preservation for the citizens of the community.

The **Office of Architectural Services of the Public Works Department**, represented by Mike Vlaovich, project manager, was acknowledged for the outstanding rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of the First Baptist Church and the Downtown Senior Services

Center. **Jan Paul Koch** was honored for the outstanding rehabilitation of the Foremaster House and preserving its history for the cultural enrichment of the city's residents and visitors alike. Lastly, local reporter **Kristen Petersen** was recognized for her outstanding reporting of historic preservation news, projects and programs and enhancing the community's appreciation of the invaluable historic resources within the city of Las Vegas. HC

HPC Wins "Best of the City" at 2008 Helldorado Parade



Historic Preservation Commissioners Jim Veltman, Claytee White and Chairman Bob Stoldal pose with the 1917 Cadillac Type 55 "Phaeton."

Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Bob Stoldal was joined by his son and fellow Commissioners Bob Bellis, Jim Veltman, Claytee White and Janet White.

Congratulations to our Historic Preservation Commissioners for their "Best of the City" parade entry and thanks to the dedicated vintage car enthusiasts for their fantastic cars. Be sure to attend the 2009 Helldorado Parade to see the HPC's encore. HC

The Historic Preservation Commission rode in the parade in high style on May 17, 2008. Their winning entry featured two beautiful vintage cars provided by the Las Vegas Cadillac LaSalle Club, a 1917 Cadillac Type 55 "Phaeton" owned by Colin Christie and a 1929 Ford "Woody" station wagon owned by Ray Potter.



Commissioner Jim Veltman and Commission Chair Bob Stoldal proudly display the "Best of City" trophy.

Have you seen it yet?

The Las Vegas Sun has produced an interactive Web site on the history of the Las Vegas Valley. According to the overview, "The Las Vegas Sun's History Project is a massive undertaking whose mission is to offer an all-encompassing look at the colorful history of Las Vegas through various multimedia elements...[and] show the amazing transformation of the city from its humble birth as a railroad way-station to its present day status as the 'Entertainment Capital of the World.'" The site features an 11-part documentary on the largest and fastest growing city founded in the 20th century. There are also more than 1,000 historic photos and archived stories. The past and present casinos on the Strip, downtown and around the valley are captured on its multi-media map. But wait, there's more! To see the Web site, go to www.lasvegassun.com/history. HC



Pictured from left to right: Jack Levine, Mary-Margaret Stratton, Pam Hartley, Sher Whitenour and Steve Franklin, Atomic Age Alliance; Corinne Escobar, Preservation Association of Clark County; Historic Preservation Commission Chairman Bob Stoldal and Commissioner Claytee White; Kristen Peterson, Las Vegas Sun, and Michael Vlaovich, City of Las Vegas Office of Architectural Services in the Public Works Department.

HP Update:

The Las Vegas Academy

The Clark County School District has painted the Las Vegas Academy, formerly the original Las Vegas High School, to match what is believed to be the original historic color of the school. The school educated many of Las Vegas' leading citizens and is a treasured historic resource in the city of Las Vegas. The Las Vegas Academy is listed on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register and the National Register of Historic Places. ❧



Las Vegas Academy

Woodlawn Cemetery

On August 6, 2008, the Woodlawn Cemetery was placed on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register. The cemetery was designated on the National Register of Historic Places on November 21, 2006. Surveyor J.T. McWilliams, who also designed the first official townsite in Las Vegas, designed the cemetery in 1914. For more information about the history of the Woodlawn Cemetery please go to www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hpc and click on "Historic Locations." ❧

Preservation Action

On June 14, Heather MacIntosh, president of Preservation Action!, a Washington, D.C. based preservation lobbying organization, met with local people active in the historic preservation community to discuss regional preservation issues. The discussion focused on funding for non-profit preservation organizations, improving communication with local and state lawmakers and the creation of an

annual preservation meeting for local groups to compare notes and create action plans. Keep an eye on the Historic Preservation Commission Web site, www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hpc, for information about future meetings. ❧

Upcoming Events

October

October 17, 2008

Historic Preservation Roundtable

Where: Historic Fifth Street School

Please check

www.lasvegasnevada.gov/hpc

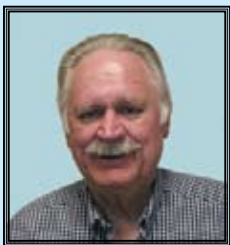
for times

Presented by the city of Las Vegas

Historic Preservation Commission

**National
Community
Planning Month**

Biography Corner: James A. Veltman, Architect, Land Planner



Historic Preservation Commissioner Jim Veltman first arrived in Las Vegas in 1989 to design the master plan for Summerlin and its 20,500 acres for The Howard Hughes Corporation. He

had just completed the environmental studies for the 18,500-acre master planned community, The Woodlands, in Houston. For the past 13 years he has served as a professional planning consultant with Studio VBM, LLC. He possesses three college degrees, Engineering and Art, Architecture and Landscape Architecture and Ecological/Regional Planning.

Fourteen years ago Veltman prepared a planning study under contract to the city of Las Vegas examining the future land use of the northwest quadrant of the city. Working extensively with the

area's residents, a plan for Rural Neighborhood Preservation and the Town Center was developed.

Veltman lives his passion for historic preservation. His first Las Vegas home in Rancho Estates was very similar in design and construction to the Morelli House and he spent a great deal of time and resources renovating it to its original aesthetic.

Veltman applies his considerable urban design and landscape design expertise to the commission. Asked what commission endeavors were most meaningful to him, Veltman responded, "Saving the Railroad Cottages from demolition was a very good action of the commission. The preservation of key architectural structures such as the Historic Fifth Street School is most commendable. Lastly, keeping tabs on historic preservation issues and elements in our watchdog role ensures that historically significant areas, buildings and elements of the city's fabric are not unnecessarily destroyed."

Veltman grew up as a "preacher's kid" and lived in many places. Today he serves as an elder of his church and chairs its building committee. He teaches landscape architecture and planning classes at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Married with four adult children, he is an artist and gardener. ❧

Lost Saved Threatened

"Editor's note: This section of the newsletter features significant restoration projects, preservation successes and threatened resources but not necessarily one of each in every issue."

Lost – Desert National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters Building (1942)

by Courtney Mooney, historic preservation officer

The "Headquarters" building, located at 1510 Decatur Boulevard, was constructed in 1942 by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) as a residence and office for Desert National Wildlife Refuge staff. The building represents one type of standard BOR housing design used by their employees at large dam construction and water development projects in the western United States from the 1930s to the 1960s.

By 2005, the property was owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who contracted with an historic preservation consultant to complete an Historic American Buildings survey. The consultant determined that the building is eligible for listing on the National

Register of Historic Places. Ownership of the property was transferred to the city of Las Vegas in 2006. Over the years the unoccupied building had fallen prey to vandalism and a fire occurred in the basement in January 2007. Several attempts were made by the city to donate the building to local government entities



East elevation of the "Headquarters" building after fire in January 2007.

and non-profit organizations, but no one accepted the offer. Subsequently, the unsafe building was demolished in September 2008. HC

Restored Fifth Street School, continued from page 1

architectural organizations. The primary tenants are the University of Nevada Las Vegas Fine Arts Program, including the Downtown Design Center for the School of Architecture; the Nevada School of the Arts (a music education organization); the American Institute of Architects (AIA); and the city of Las Vegas Cultural Affairs Division of the City Manager's Office.

The complex also offers common areas for public or private functions including a multi-purpose performance area/auditorium, gallery space, open courtyards and the 16,000-square-foot outdoor Centennial Plaza.

Special thanks to Dennis McBride, curator of history and collections for the Nevada State Museum, who provided historic research assistance for this article.



The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member board made up of community members appointed by the Las Vegas City Council. The board is responsible for hearing and making recommendations regarding the designation of historic landmarks, properties and districts to the city's historic register; overseeing alterations and new construction of designated historic properties and making recommendations to the City Council. Meetings: 4th Wednesday of each month, 12:15 pm, 731 S. Fourth Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101 except in November and December which are typically held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.

Bob Stoldal, chairperson
Dorothy Wright, vice-chairperson
Mary Hausch
Patrick J. Klenk
Robert Bellis
Janet Ruth White
Richard H. Cuppett
James Veltman
Raymond Aikens
Claytee White
Greg Seymour
David Millman, ex-officio

For more information about historic preservation efforts, contact:
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Historic Fifth Street School Timeline...

- 1905 Las Vegas founded.
- 1911 Las Vegas becomes an incorporated city.
- 1934 Originally constructed school on this site burns to ground.
- 1936 Las Vegas Grammar School opens.
- 1970 Complex converted to Clark County Courthouse offices.
- 1988 School building added to National Register of Historic Places.
- 1992 School complex added to local register of historic places.
- 1996 Complex acquired by city.
- 2004 Las Vegas City Council approves the transfer of school's title to the city's Redevelopment Agency, allowing for the use of redevelopment funds for building rehabilitation.
- 2008 Rededication of Historic Fifth Street School and use as downtown "cultural oasis." HC

"Old" New Look Please enjoy the new design of Historic Connections. Many thanks to Historic Preservation Commissioners Patrick Klenk and Jim Veltman and Vice Chair Dorothy Wright for their design guidance, and to Julie Ray and Rita Schoonmaker, graphic artists, for their talents and skill.